



## **The League of Women Voters**

*Unwaveringly committed to the power of the people*

House Committee on State Administration – March 9, 2009

The League Of Women Voters of Montana has supported holding legislative sessions in each year of a biennium since our study of the Montana Constitution in 1969-70. We supported the annual sessions provided in the 1972 constitution and we have supported subsequent attempts to allow the legislature to meet on a different schedule than 90 consecutive days in the first year of each biennium.

The League believes that the split session this bill provides would be beneficial to both legislators and to the people of Montana for 5 major reasons

1. It would allow the legislature to better fulfill its obligation in the balance of power among the legislative, executive and judicial branches of State Government. This balance is difficult at best when the executive and judicial branches are in session 5 days a week, 52 weeks a year, and the legislature meets for approximately four months only once every two years.
2. It would allow better legislative oversight of both budget and policy initiatives put forth by the legislature and administered by executive offices.
3. It would allow the legislature to act more quickly in addressing emerging issues that may not require a special session, but do change the governmental playing field.

4. It would allow legislators more time to become informed on both budget and policy issues and to more thoroughly discuss those issues before having to take a position in a committee or in full session.
5. It would open the possibility of legislative service to additional persons who may not be able to spend a full four months away from business, profession or family, and would allow individuals and groups more opportunity to become familiar with issues and to make their views known to their legislators.

The League believes this bill will strengthen the legislature as a branch of an integrated State Government, and will make its deliberations more available and accountable to the people of our State. We stand ready to help provide discussion, information and support for this constitutional amendment from passage by this committee through a 'yes' vote of the people of Montana. Please vote yes on SB348.

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